

A North Star F.C. Introductory manual for Coaches



Useful ideas around the basics of starting off coaching.

Thoughts on Coaching Methodology for Soccer

To be effective with their players a coach should be able to change to different coaching methods to suit the moment.

Whilst we all have our own style; some do it quietly, some are more demonstrative, some are more vocal (but please don't talk too much); if they do it in a positive manner, encouraging and none threatening and create positive results in their players, then all styles can be effective.

Soccer is a game of the moment and players, not coaches, need to decide at that moment what they should do on the field, we need to help them to make that decision for themselves.

Soccer is the perfect sport for placing the decision-making responsibilities on the player.

Other sports are often Coach decision making driven, our sport is not.

This document serves as a comprehensive coaching training guide for soccer coaches working with young players aged 4 to 12.

It outlines developmental training programs that focus on technical, tactical, psychological, and physical attributes necessary for players at different age stages.

Stages of Development

Fundamental Stage (4-7 years): Emphasizes fun and technical skill development in a non-competitive environment to encourage learning and repetition.

Self-Thinking Stage (8-9 years): Introduces pressure in training and encourages players to make their own decisions while still focusing on technical skills and individual awareness.

Decision Making Stage (10-11 years): Focuses on turning techniques into skills in game situations, emphasizing tactical and physical development alongside technical skills.

Training Structure: Suggesting a session plan that includes warm-ups, skill development, small-sided games, and cool-downs to maximize learning and engagement.

Key Themes for 4-7 years: Incorporates fast footwork, dribbling, control, passing, and combination plays, with a focus on individual skills.

Key Themes for 8-9 years: Expands on previous themes while introducing defending skills and team shape concepts to enhance understanding of the game.

Key Themes for 10-12 years: Introduces advanced skills, conditioning, and team dynamics, encouraging players to apply their skills in more complex game scenarios.

Importance of Small-Sided Games: Highlights the benefits of smaller formats for increasing player touches on the ball and simplifying decision-making processes.

Coaching Philosophy: Stresses the importance of a positive attitude, intrinsic motivation, and fostering creativity among young players.

Player Development Focus: Encourages continuous learning and adaptation to players' individual needs and progress through various training stages.

Here are some key coaching points:

1. **Coaching Style:** This is based on personality, temperament, and philosophies on how the game should be played. It varies depending on the ages and abilities of the players.
2. **Coaching Method:** Different methods are important to get the best out of players. These methods can be implemented to various degrees at different times.
3. **Communication:** Coaching methods can be directive, participative, or supportive. It's important to listen and encourage players to speak back and forth.
4. **Directive Method:** The coach decides, and the players listen and comply. However, it's crucial to ensure that players understand why they are doing what they are told.
5. **Question and Answer Method:** The coach stimulates the player into a response to direct questions. This helps in understanding if the player comprehends the situation.
6. **Guided Discovery Method:** The coach leads the players to make their own decisions. This method is considered the best as it encourages players to think for themselves and learn from their actions.

Training structure: Example of a potential session plan

We would ask you to have the players making as many touches on the ball throughout your session as is possible, we prefer no running without the ball, doing laps etc.

1. **Co-ordination and speed work:** Balance / quick feet. (Optional based on time).
2. **Warm up:** Ball each. They must get lots of touches to get comfortable on the ball to begin the session.
3. **Theme of the day:** Devise your own or use one of many ideas we provide for you.
4. **Scrimmage:** To practice when, where, and how to apply the theme. They could be Small-Sided Game's and preferably 3 v 3 game size but ultimately based on the number of players you have.
5. **Cool down:** Ball each workout if time allows.
6. **Concluding discussion:** What did they learn today?
 1. Five minutes.
 2. Five minutes.
 3. 25 minutes.
 4. 15 minutes.
 5. Five minutes.
 6. Five minutes. TOTAL = ONE HOUR

You can play around with the times for each based on your own preferences.

By using a structure, you can focus on the minds of the players thereby increasing the work time and decreasing the talk time. Players arrive for training and know what to do and can get straight into the warmup without prompting.

More Demonstration and less Explanation works best. If you have time use a session planner to have a record of what you did; if it went well and what you may change for next time to make it better. Build up your own record of what you did over a season; develop your own program.

Themes of Play

Here are the main ones to focus on:

1. Dribbling Sessions
2. Passing, Control and Movement sessions
3. Combination Movements sessions
4. Receiving and Turning Sessions
5. Running with the ball sessions
6. Awareness Training Sessions
7. Possession Training Sessions
8. Shooting and Finishing Sessions
9. Defending sessions
10. Goalkeeper Training

With limited time, here are the likely ones to incorporate in training based on order of importance:

1. Dribbling Sessions
2. Passing, Control and Movement sessions
3. Shooting and Finishing sessions
4. Receiving and Turning Sessions
5. Running with the ball sessions

For advanced training please refer to the “Grass-Roots Coaching Manual” where you will find many session plans to use for these themes.

What are we trying to achieve from our training session?

Main components we look for coaches performing in training to achieve the best results:

1. Keeping the players motivated, interested, busy, focused, developing confidence and having fun.
2. Encouraged two-way communication with players.
3. Effected the Mental / Intellectual development of players (self-determination).
4. Encouraged player centered decision making, avoided coach centered.
5. Ensured the practice was challenging mentally and physically for the players.
6. The practice was structured to ensure the progressive development of the theme (technical to tactical).
7. Produced a scrimmage at the end that was game situational / relevant to match scenarios.

Comments for The Future for the coaches to ask themselves:

1. What went well in today's practice?
2. What needs improvement?
3. What action can be taken to improve the next practice or what innovation can be made into practice?
4. Was the session effective in developing and executing the theme?
5. Ask the players their opinions on all this.